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DEPT FOR EUR/CARC

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [GG](#)
SUBJECT: ABKHAZIA CLOSES BORDER AFTER BLASTS, GEORGIANS
ARREST RUSSIAN NEAR SOUTH OSSETIA

Classified By: Ambassador John F. Tefft for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (SBU) As a result of several blasts in Abkhazia on June 29 and 30, Abkhaz de facto President Sergey Bagapsh closed all border crossings with Georgia, including the Inguri River crossing, on July 1. UNOMIG confirmed on June 30 that around noon two blasts went off the same day in Sokhumi. One of the explosives was placed in a trash bin and the other near a taxi van, both near the center of the city. The type of explosives is unknown and UNOMIG could confirm no injuries. Georgian press reported up to six people suffered minor injuries from the blasts, including Russian vacationers.

¶2. (SBU) One day earlier, on June 29, two similar blasts occurred near Gagra's town center, in upper Abkhazia. According to the Georgian press, six people also suffered minor injuries. Georgian government officials have strongly denied Abkhaz allegations of involvement in these incidents. The Abkhaz also have alleged one person died, although this is unconfirmed. In contrast to other reports, Georgian TV company Rustavi-2 reported on June 30 that four people were killed and 20 were "badly wounded" in the blasts on June 29 and 30.

¶3. (C) With regard to a Russian press report that a Russian citizen was kidnapped in South Ossetia, Shota Utiashvili (Head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs Analytical Department) confirmed to Poloff on July 1 that the Georgian border police arrested a Russian citizen -- from Vladikavkaz -- for illegally crossing the border. Utiashvili claimed the arrest was made on June 29 in Ergneti, a village on the Georgian side of the administrative border. Utiashvili said the Russian is being held in a detention center and has a state-provided lawyer.

¶4. (U) Also on June 30, Georgian press reported eyewitnesses at the Ganmukhruli Patriotic Youth Camp (near the Abkhazian border) observed two Russian-made MiG (Hind) helicopters flying over the camp, apparently photographing the area.

¶5. (C) Comment: Rustavi-2 has been an unreliable source for recent events in Georgia, especially on the conflicts. The timing of the blasts, coupled with other events such as the arrest, indicate continued tensions in the conflict regions. It is unclear who set off the explosives. Both sides accuse the other. MFA officials told the Ambassador on June 29 that while Georgia does possess some operational capabilities in Abkhazia, they do not extend to Gagra. End comment.
TEFFT